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ABSTRACT

The National Education Association developed this audit tool for interested affiliates to use to assess standards-based education in their states by gathering and analyzing information about its implementation and to array the information they gather against a set of standards that can help ensure that standards-based education fulfills its promise. The audit tool will also help in the development of an action plan to strengthen standards-based education. The audit tool is built around 10 standards that describe an integrated standards-based education system. The audit involves four steps: (1) tailor the audit tool for the state in question; (2) gather implementation evidence for each of the 10 standards; (3) summarize the audit findings; and (4) develop an action plan to improve standards-based education. A graphic overview of these 4 steps is followed by the 10 standards, with examples of indicators, key implementation questions, and supporting evidence for each standard. The tool also includes forms that can be used to add to the indicators and modify the key questions and supporting evidence and summarize the audit findings for each standard. The final section of the tool arrays questions related to developing an action plan. (SLD)

A Tool For Auditing Standards-Based Education

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Standards-Based Education

All children can—and should—learn to high standards. This is a central tenet of standards-based education. There is growing concern, however, that standards-based education may not attain the goal of optimum student achievement if it continues on its present course. This concern has led to calls for midcourse corrections to strengthen the implementation and outcomes of the standards movement. But which corrections are most needed? Which are feasible? And to what end? NEA has developed the audit tool contained in this booklet to assist affiliates as they address these questions.

Standards-Based Reform Defined

As standards-based education has evolved, it has become synonymous with standards, high-stakes testing, and accountability. In our view, this perspective is too limited. We use the term *standards-based education* to refer to an integrated system in which key elements—policies, resources, curriculum, instruction, standards, assessment, and accountability—are coordinated and work in tandem.

Improving Implementation

NEA has developed the audit tool for interested affiliates to use to:

- Assess standards-based education in their states by gathering and analyzing information about its implementation;
- Array the information they gather against a set of standards that can help ensure that standards-based education fulfills its promise; and
- Develop an action plan that will strengthen standards-based education in their states.

Standards for Auditing the Implementation of Standards-Based Education

The audit tool is built around ten standards that describe an integrated standards-based education system. These standards capture what educators, policy makers, researchers, parents, and observers say are the key elements of an effective standards-based education system.

Standard 1 All students are achieving at high levels.

Standard 2 All students have access to the resources they need to attain high standards.

Standard 3 All students are taught by teachers with the knowledge and skills to teach to high standards.

Standard 4 Student standards are developed, implemented, and revised in ways that maximize their usefulness.

Standard 5 Student standards inform curriculum and instruction.

Standard 6 Students are treated fairly in assessment programs and accountability systems.

Standard 7 Assessments used to make decisions affecting students, schools, or districts meet widely accepted technical and professional criteria.

Standard 8 Assessment and accountability are used to improve teaching and learning.

Standard 9 All stakeholders are accountable for making standards-based education work.

Standard 10 The implementation and impact of standards-based education are tracked and reported.

For each standard, the audit tool includes:

- **Implementation indicators.** These are conditions that indicate the extent to which a state's standards-based education system meets the standard. Affiliates may wish to add state-specific indicators to the list.
- **Examples of key questions related to each of the indicators.**

- **Examples of supporting evidence that answer key questions.**

The key questions and supporting evidence included in the tool are suggestions. Affiliates will likely need to adapt the tool so it is appropriate to standards-based education in their states.

Reclaiming A Vision

This audit tool is designed to help NEA affiliates and others improve the implementation of standards-based reform in their states. The tool's standards are grounded in a vision of standards-based education advanced by two of the standards movement's proponents, J. A. O' Day and M. S. Smith (1993). It is a vision worth reclaiming.

O'Day and Smith maintained that major changes were needed in the way that states and school districts made and implemented policies for standards-based education to work. They asserted that:

- A clear vision of what students should know and be able to do supports the system and spurs changes that enhance educational quality.
- All children should have access to challenging academic content and the opportunity to learn to a high standard of performance.
- Schools should have the resources, flexibility, and responsibility to educate their students to a high level of performance.

All parts of the education system—school curriculum, curriculum materials, teacher training and licensure, continuing professional development, and assessment—should support standards-based education.

Why Affiliates Conduct an Audit

Reasons for conducting the audit may vary from affiliate to affiliate. In most cases, however, the affiliate has decided the time is right for some midcourse corrections to standards-based education. This decision may be made in response to national calls for such corrections, or it may be that the time is propitious for an audit because of the current progress (or lack of progress) in standards-based education in the state.

Adapting the Audit Tool to State-Specific Contexts

Because standards-based education varies from state to state, affiliates will need to adapt this tool. Forms for adaptation are included for each standard.



The Audit

Deciding How to Conduct the Audit

The ways in which affiliates conduct the audit vary greatly. For instance, a decision about whether to conduct the audit alone or in conjunction with other organizations rests on a range of factors across states and affiliates. Here are four options affiliates might consider as they decide how to conduct the audit:

Option A: Share the audit tool with other education and community groups in your state. Invite them to join the audit team and complete the audit. The completed audit, representing the spectrum of education interests, could be a powerful tool for change.

Option B: Assemble a team of members from around the state who will work with affiliate staff to conduct the audit. Share the results—and recommended changes in the implementation of standards-based education—with other education groups, the community, and/or policy makers.

Option C: Team up with a watchdog group, policy center, or some other influential organization in your state to conduct the audit. Issue a joint report on recommended changes to strengthen the implementation of standards-based education.

Option D: Support local associations' audits of standards-based education in districts around the state. Use the information from the locals to provide a picture of implementation challenges around the state, and develop a set of recommended ways to address those challenges. Another option may be appropriate in a particular state, but no matter how affiliates decide to conduct the audit, its results should be used to develop an action agenda to improve the implementation of standards-based education.



Conducting the Audit

The audit involves four steps:

1. Tailor the audit tool for your state.
2. Gather implementation evidence for each standard.
3. Summarize the audit findings.
4. Develop an action plan to improve standards-based education.

1. Tailor the audit tool for your state.

The examples of key questions and supporting evidence included in the audit tool are intended to guide users. They will need to be adapted to relate to state-specific contexts. Affiliates also may decide to add to the list of indicators that are listed for each of the standards, again so they capture conditions in their states. Reviewing and adapting the tool for state-specific contexts is the first step in the audit.

- a. Review the ten standards for auditing the implementation of standards-based education. Become thoroughly acquainted with the standards before proceeding with the audit.

- b. Tailor the indicators that are listed for each standard for your state. Start with Standard 1 or any other standard that is especially important in your state and work through all ten. The indicators are the conditions that need to be in place to meet the standard. Add to the list of indicators so they capture conditions in your state.





2. Gather implementation evidence for each standard.

"Guesstimating" how well standards-based education is operating is a tricky proposition. Gathering evidence of the implementation of standards-based education, however, provides a firm footing for drawing conclusions and developing action plans.

Therefore, the action plan you develop to improve standards-based education in your state needs to be grounded in solid evidence about its implementation. Some of the examples of implementation evidence included in the audit tool may apply to your state. Others will not. You may need to gather and report additional examples or other kinds of evidence that are appropriate for your state.

- a. **Decide how to collect and report supporting evidence for each standard.** The kind of evidence you gather will vary across standards, and across the indicators for each standard. Some of the evidence will reside in state-level data sources; other pieces of evidence will be local. And in some cases, it may be necessary to do original data collection by contacting members.

Identify agencies and individuals to contact; establish a data collection and reporting time line; and assign tasks to various individuals, or to the different organizations that have joined you to conduct the audit. Gather and report evidence for each indicator under each standard.

- b. **Array the evidence for each standard.** Compile and review the evidence for each standard to determine if it provides an accurate and adequate picture of the implementation status of each indicator.

3. Summarize the audit findings.

After you have collected and arrayed the evidence for each standard, it is time to summarize it. The evidence should pinpoint where implementation of the indicators and the standards needs to be strengthened.

- a. **Review and summarize the evidence for each standard.** Summarize what the evidence says about the implementation of each indicator by answering questions included in the audit tool. The questions are on a form that can be duplicated for each standard.
- b. **Identify needed changes or improvements in implementation.** The audit evidence will suggest gaps or weaknesses in the implementation of the standards and indicators.
- c. **Review the audit findings for all the standards.** Review the summaries for each standard. The evidence should provide a picture of what is and what is not functioning well in your state's standards-based education system.



4. Develop an action plan to improve standards-based education.

The action plan should be grounded in the audit findings and in strategic considerations related to your members, your state context, and the resources at your disposal.

- a. **Answer key questions as a foundation for action planning.** Your answers to these questions will provide information to develop an action plan to improve the implementation of standards-based education.
 - What do the audit findings indicate?
 - What is the association's position/capacity?
 - What are the positions and priorities of audit partners or allies? Where are the matches with the association's position? The differences?

What do the audit findings indicate?

1. Does the evidence you gathered indicate certain standards and/or indicators have not yet been fully implemented? If yes, what is not yet in place?
2. According to the audit, which standards and/or indicators are most in need of strengthening?

What is the association's position/capacity?

1. Which indicators and standards are your members' highest priorities?
2. Which indicators or standards can you most effectively influence?

What are the positions and priorities of audit partners and allies?

1. Which standards and/or indicators are high priorities for the organizations that have conducted the audit with you?
2. Which standards and/or indicators are high priorities for any organizations you enlist to improve the implementation of standards-based education?



- b. **Make strategic decisions.** Most important, decide the standard(s) and/or indicator(s) on which you will act.

It also is important to consider which standards or indicators you can influence or improve quickly, and which will take longer to improve.

Weigh the audit findings, and the standard(s) and indicator(s) you will work to strengthen, against the time, personnel, and monetary resources at your disposal.

1. What changes in the implementation of specific standards and/or indicators will you advocate, and why?
2. How will your actions on one standard or indicator affect the rest of the standards-based education system?
3. How will you advance the changes you are advocating and ensure they are made?

- c. **Decide how to best effect changes and improvements.** A legislative strategy may be needed. Or you may need to work with a state agency such as the department of education. Or key education policy makers may need to hear and act on your recommendations.



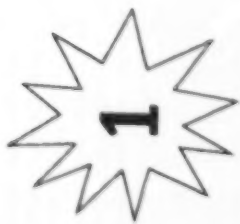
How the Audit Tool Is Organized

The next few pages of the audit tool provide a graphic overview of the four steps involved in conducting the audit.

The graphic overview is followed by the ten standards—with examples of indicators, key implementation questions, and supporting evidence for each standard.

Next, the tool includes forms you can use to: (a) add to the indicators and modify the key questions and supporting evidence so they are appropriate for your state and (b) summarize audit findings for each standard. These forms can be duplicated.

The final section of the tool arrays questions related to developing an action plan to improve standards-based education.



Using the Audit Tool

Before beginning the audit, take a moment to review the steps involved in conducting the audit against the audit tool's format.

Step 1: Tailor the audit tool for your state.

Review the ten standards. Identify additions that apply in your state.

Standard 1. All students are achieving at high levels.

Indicators for Standard 1

1a. Achievement gaps that existed previously have been closed.

1b. Achievement is improving among the lowest performing schools and students.

Evidence of Implementation

Key Questions

Are gaps in achievement between certain groups of students (e.g., reported by race, poverty level, language background, gender) narrowing over time?

Are the resources needed to improve the quality of education for all students directed at the schools and students most in need?

Supporting Evidence

Student test scores are similarly high across all groups of students; dropout rates are similar for various groups of students.

Targeted resources have raised student achievement and the overall performance of chronically underperforming schools.

Add state-specific indicators to the list.

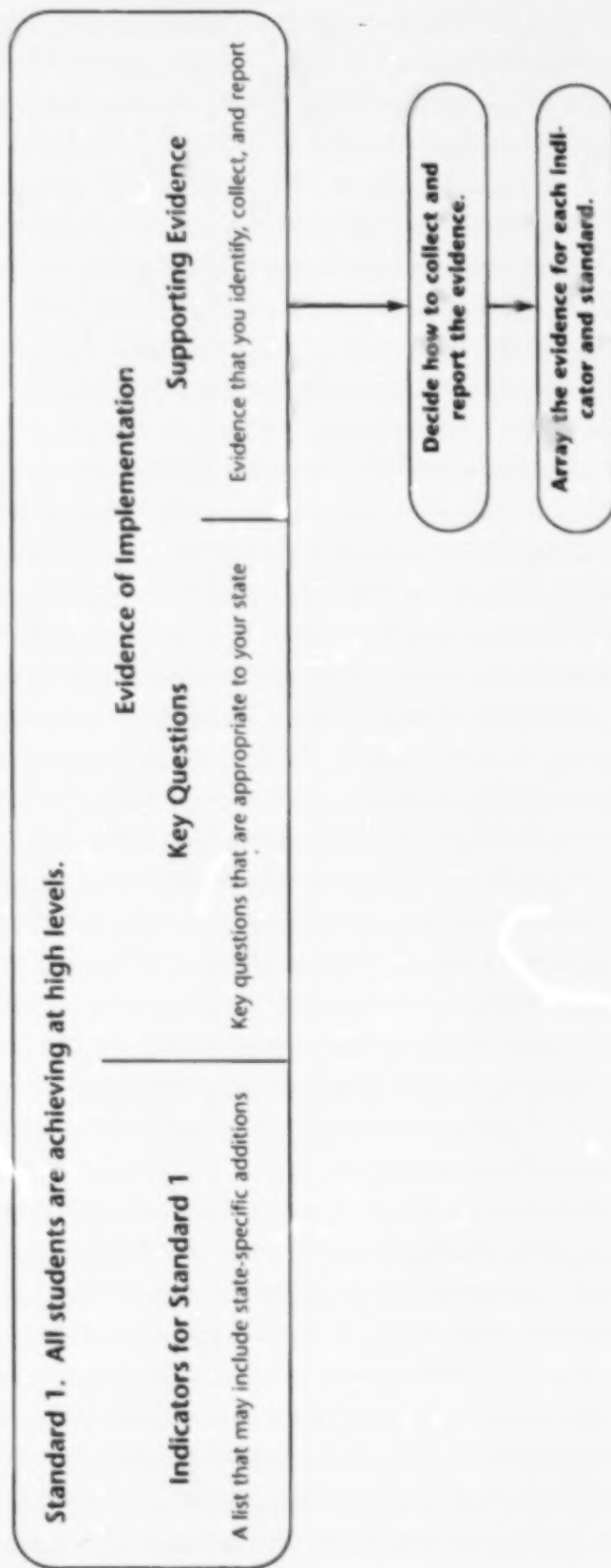
Adapt the key questions for your state.

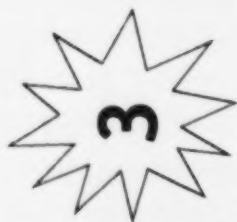
Identify supporting evidence that is appropriate for your state.





Step 2: Gather implementation evidence for each standard.





Step 3: Summarize the audit findings.

Standard 1. All students are achieving at high levels.

Indicators for Standard 1

A list that may include state-specific additions

Evidence of Implementation

Key Questions

Key questions that are appropriate to your state

Supporting Evidence

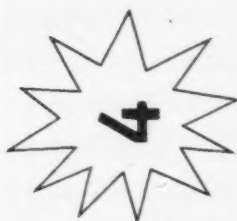
Evidence that you identify, collect, and report

Summary of audit findings for Standard 1

1. Is additional evidence needed to evaluate the implementation of any of the indicators? If yes, what information is needed?
2. Which indicators are in place and how does the evidence support this conclusion?
3. Which indicators are *not* in place and how does the evidence support this conclusion?
4. What changes does the evidence suggest will strengthen the implementation of the indicators that are not yet in place?

Review and summarize the evidence for each indicator.

Identify needed changes or improvements that the evidence indicates will strengthen the implementation of the indicators.



Step 4: Develop an action plan to improve standards-based education.

Answer key questions as a foundation for action planning.

1. What do the audit findings indicate?
 2. What is the association's position/capacity?
- What are the positions and priorities of audit partners and allies?

Make strategic decisions.

1. What changes in the implementation of specific standards and/or indicators will you advocate, and why?
2. How will your actions on one standard or indicator affect the rest of the standards-based education system?
3. How will you advance the changes you are advocating and ensure that they are made?

Decide how to best effect changes and improvements.

1. Is a legislative strategy needed?
2. Is outreach to the press or media needed?
3. Is a public information campaign needed?





Standard 1: All students are achieving at high levels.

Indicators for Standard 1	Key Questions	Evidence of Implementation	Supporting Evidence
1a. Achievement gaps that existed previously have been closed.	Are gaps in achievement between certain groups of students (e.g., reported by race, poverty level, language background, gender) narrowing over time?	Test scores are similarly high across all groups of students; dropout rates are similar for various groups of students (e.g., standards-based education does not appear to lead to increased school dropout rates for minority or disadvantaged students).	Test scores in the lowest performing schools have increased over time, including the performance of students as they move from one grade to the next.
1b. Achievement is improving among the lowest performing schools and students.	Are differences in student achievement at the lowest performing schools and other schools decreasing?	Scores on assessments that are linked to the standards indicate students are making acceptable progress toward meeting the standards if they have not already demonstrated proficiency.	A review by a special task force of teachers from various subject areas indicates a strong match between the standards and curriculum in most subjects. Students are not "tracked" into lower level curriculum offerings, but are provided rigorous and individualized opportunities to learn.
1c. All students are attaining high academic standards.	Are individual students (regardless of race, poverty level, language background, and gender) able to demonstrate mastery of the content outlined in the standards? If not, what evidence is available to indicate their progress in meeting the standards?	Does the curriculum in various subject areas reflect the standards for those subjects? In what ways has the curriculum become more engaging?	
1d. All students have access to engaging curriculum that is derived from the standards.			



Standard 2: All students have access to the resources they need to attain high standards.

Indicators for Standard 2	Key Questions	Evidence of Implementation	Supporting Evidence
2a. Appropriate class size (the number of students assigned to a teacher) enables teachers to provide students with individual attention.	How are class sizes established at various grade levels? Is there a trained instructional assistant, or other form of support, in larger classes?	Teachers have input into class size limits and, as a result, report current class size enables them to deliver quality instruction for all students, and many who teach larger classes report they have one or more trained instructional assistants.	District budgets have increased, or have been reallocated, in ways that support standards-based education. Districts and schools have used these additional monies to improve the quality of their curriculum, purchase instructional materials, and improve the quality of professional development.
2b. Resources match the new demands of standards-based education.	How has the level (or allocation) of resources (e.g., financial, curricular, instructional, professional development, personnel) available to districts and schools changed since the introduction of standards-based education? Do the most needy schools and districts have access to the resources needed to change performance levels? Do schools, students, and teachers have enough of the right kind of resources—and the right kind of support? Are standards used as a lever to provide students with additional resources and services?	Low-performing schools receive additional funds to implement programs, purchase materials, hire staff, and provide one-on-one tutoring for selected students. Access to computers, the Internet, instructional materials, and teams of expert teachers who can assist colleagues is available to all students, schools, and teachers. Students who are not attaining at high levels receive additional resources/support such as one-on-one tutoring and before and after school enrichment.	District budgets have increased, or have been reallocated, in ways that support standards-based education. Districts and schools have used these additional monies to improve the quality of their curriculum, purchase instructional materials, and improve the quality of professional development. Low-performing schools receive additional funds to implement programs, purchase materials, hire staff, and provide one-on-one tutoring for selected students. Access to computers, the Internet, instructional materials, and teams of expert teachers who can assist colleagues is available to all students, schools, and teachers. Students who are not attaining at high levels receive additional resources/support such as one-on-one tutoring and before and after school enrichment.
2c. Students needing special resources and services receive them.	Are standards used as a lever to provide students with needed resources and services? Are students who receive special education services and English language learners included in assessments that measure whether students have attained high academic standards?	Students' progress is monitored to determine if they have special needs. Resources and services are provided. All students take the assessments. The performance of students who receive special services or who participate in special programs is reported. This information is used to plan programs to meet students' needs.	Students' progress is monitored to determine if they have special needs. Resources and services are provided. All students take the assessments. The performance of students who receive special services or who participate in special programs is reported. This information is used to plan programs to meet students' needs.



Standard 3: All students are taught by teachers with the knowledge and skills to teach to high standards.

Indicators for Standard 3	Key Questions	Evidence of Implementation	Supporting Evidence
3a. Teachers are fully licensed and teach only in their area(s) of certification or endorsement.	What steps have been taken to eliminate emergency licenses and out-of-field assignments? Are the number of emergency licenses and out-of-field assignments monitored and reported? Are there reciprocal licensing agreements with other states to increase the pool of qualified teachers? Do those who enter teaching via alternative routes meet the same licensing requirements as other new teachers?	The state limits the use of emergency teaching licenses. Out-of-field teaching is permitted only with appropriate additional training, in limited circumstances, for a finite period. The number of out-of-field teachers and teachers with emergency licenses is reported annually and is decreasing. The state grants teaching licenses based on reciprocal agreements with other states. The state requires all teachers to meet the same licensing requirements.	
3b. Teachers engage in professional development that increases their knowledge and skills to teach to high standards.	Does professional development equip teachers to teach to high standards? How is professional development organized? Does it meet standards of "good" professional development? Are resources allocated to professional development?	Professional development is keyed to understanding standards and their relationship to instruction, assessment. A regular part of a teacher's day, professional development includes training, and time and/or compensation to work with colleagues. It meets standards established by the National Staff Development Council. The state is allocating more funds for professional development.	
3c. Policies and programs are in place to attract and retain qualified teachers.	Are teachers recruited, especially in high-demand subjects and hard-to-staff schools? Are teacher salaries competitive with those in nearby states? Are they adequate to attract and retain teachers? Are there induction/support programs for new teachers and for teachers in new assignments?	The number of teachers hired for high-need subjects and locations is increasing. Teacher salaries are competitive with those in nearby states, but not with other professional salaries. Most districts have mentoring programs and evidence suggests they are helping to retain teachers.	
3d. The profession's highest standards for accomplished teaching are supported.	How is the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) recognized?	NBPTS standards are benchmarks for accomplished teaching. Strategies and resources are increasing the number of National Board Certified teachers.	



Standard 4: Student standards are developed, implemented, and revised in ways that maximize their usefulness.

Indicators for Standard 4	Evidence of Implementation	
	Key Questions	Supporting Evidence
4a. Student standards articulate a clear vision of what students should know and be able to do that reflects broad-based consensus.	Are the standards clear and understandable? How were student standards developed?	Teachers and parents say the standards are clear. Teachers, other educators, parents, and community members developed the standards.
4b. The number of standards is limited	How many standards are there in various subject areas? At various grade levels? Do teachers have enough time in the school year to teach the content required by the standards?	The number of standards has been reduced. Teachers have received guidance based on test data or other relevant information on which standards should receive priority.
4c. The standards address significant or essential concepts, skills, and/or knowledge.	Do the standards focus on what is essential/significant or on what can easily be assessed?	Teachers report that the standards assess "big" concepts, focus on lifelong skills, and address essential concepts students need to master.
4d. Content standards are aligned across subject areas and grades.	Are the standards across subjects related or separate from each other?	Although they are subject-specific, standards in such core areas as reading and language arts, math, social studies, and science also address a common set of student competencies.
4e. Performance standards define multiple degrees of content mastery.	Do performance standards enable students at all levels of achievement to demonstrate what they know and can do? How explicit are performance standards about what students must know and do to demonstrate proficiency?	The standards define performance along a continuum on which all students can demonstrate proficiency. Performance standards are explicit and include examples of student work that meets the standards.
4f. Teachers and others periodically review and revise the standards.	How are standards reviewed and revised? What role do teachers play? How do revisions strengthen the standards?	Standards in various subject areas are on regularly scheduled review and revision cycles in which teachers participate. Teachers also meet regularly to review student work as a basis for revisions. With each revision, the standards are becoming clearer and more succinct.



Standard 5: Student standards inform curriculum and instruction.

Evidence of Implementation		
Indicators for Standard 5	Key Questions	Supporting Evidence
Sa. Student standards are used to plan curriculum and instruction.	How are standards implemented? Do teachers see the standards as useful? To what extent are curriculum and instruction aligned to the standards? How are teachers involved in planning curriculum and instruction?	Subject area standards are phased in over time so that teachers can revise instruction before another set of standards is introduced. Because they were involved in their development, the standards reflect teachers' content expertise and are accepted as legitimate and important guidance in planning curriculum and instruction. Teachers across subject areas and grade levels have successfully aligned or coordinated their instruction and the curriculum to state standards. They have received time during the school day and year to accomplish this.
Sb. Curriculum and instruction reflect, but are not limited to, state or local standards.	Are students provided a broad curriculum?	Subjects for which standards have not been developed are included in the curriculum and in teachers' instruction. Subjects for which there are standards but no assessments (e.g., art, music) also are included in the curriculum.
Sc. The curriculum is rich and deep.	What is the curriculum offered each student like?	The curriculum covers basic skills, but also focuses on thinking skills, problem solving, and a deep understanding of subject matter.
Sd. Teachers determine how they will educate all students to attain high standards.	How do teachers make this determination?	Teachers regularly examine student work related to the standards and tailor their instruction to meet student needs.



Standard 6: Students are treated fairly in assessment programs and accountability systems.

Evidence of Implementation		Supporting Evidence
Indicators for Standard 6	Key Questions	
6a. No decision affecting individual students is based on results from a single assessment.	What is the role of assessment in high-stakes decisions?	High stakes decisions (i.e., placement in programs, promotion, graduation) are based on multiple measures of students' performance: test results, as well as other achievement evidence (e.g., information from teachers).
6b. All students are included in required assessments, with appropriate accommodations (or alternative assessments) as needed.	Are there accommodations or alternative assessments for students who need them?	The state has issued guidelines for making accommodations in test format and administration. Some assessments have been adapted for English language learners. In rare cases, alternative assessments are used.
6c. Performance on required assessments is reported for all students and for subgroups of students.	How are student scores on assessments required by the state or district reported? Is it possible to discern how various groups of students performed (e.g., English language learners, students with disabilities)?	The state department of education reports how all students, including English language learners, students with disabilities, students receiving Title I services, and other subgroups performed on statewide assessments.
6d. Performance levels (or passing scores) reflect broad input and are linked to student standards.	How are passing scores established? How are teachers involved? Parents? The broader community?	There is widespread participation in setting and revising passing scores, cut scores, or performance standards.
6e. Scores on required assessments are only one indicator of student, school, or district performance	Does the state (or district) routinely report other indicators? If yes, what are they? If not, what kind of performance indicators should be reported?	The state (or district) routinely reports other indicators (e.g., dropout rates, high school course-taking patterns, retention rates).
6f. The state monitors the effects of the assessment program and accountability system on students, schools, and districts.	How does the state determine if the assessment program and accountability system are functioning as intended? How is the information used to make improvements?	Each year the state department conducts regional meetings and asks students, parents, educators, community members, and others about positive and negative effects. Updated guidance from the state reflects feedback from educators and others.
6g. Contextual information needed to interpret students' performance is reported.	What kind of contextual information (e.g., student demographics, school funding) is reported?	Descriptive data amplify results of student performance and changes in performance over time. Changes in school staffing and administration also are reported.



Standard 7: Assessments that are used to make decisions affecting students, schools, or districts meet widely accepted technical and professional criteria.

Indicators for Standard 7	Evidence of Implementation	Supporting Evidence
7a. The assessments that are included in the assessment and accountability system are used for the purposes for which they were designed.	Key Questions What do the test designers or developers say are the purposes for which each test should be used? Are tests being used for the purposes for which they are designed—and only for those purposes?	Written information from developers about tests' purposes clearly indicates how each test should be used. The tests are being used for additional purposes, but these are supported by evidence from the developer that it is appropriate to use the tests for each additional purpose.
7b. Assessments that are used to measure educational quality are designed specifically for this purpose.	Is students' performance on required assessments used to judge the quality of the education schools or districts provide? Were the assessments designed for this purpose? Do the assessments measure what is taught in schools?	Students' performance on the state assessment is key in accreditation decisions at the district level. The test was designed specifically for the state for this purpose. An analysis provides evidence of which test items assess content/skills that are typically taught in schools.
7c. Required state (and local) assessments measure the skills and knowledge described in student standards.	Do required state or district tests assess content and skills that are in state or local student standards?	Teachers report that the required assessments measure the most representative and important knowledge and skills in the standards.
7d. The assessments are valid for all student populations tested.	Is there evidence that required assessments are valid for all students who take them? What does the test performance of different groups of students suggest about the validity of the assessments?	Information on test validity is available from the test developers. Students' errors reflect students' knowledge, understanding, and skill rather than bias in the assessments.
7e. The assessments provide information on students' current achievement and their progress over time.	What "snapshot" of student achievement do required state (or local) assessments provide? What kind of information do assessments provide as students move from grade to grade?	The state assessment provides information on the performance of 4th, 8th, and 11th graders in reading and language arts, science, and social studies. The required assessments do not provide this information; that is, the performance of grade cohorts is not tracked over time (e.g., from 4th through 8th grade). Longitudinal information on student performance is available in student report cards.



Standard 8: Assessment and accountability are used to improve teaching and learning.

Indicators for Standard 8	Evidence of Implementation	Supporting Evidence
Key Questions		
8a. Assessment programs and accountability systems provide complete and useful information for teachers, schools, and districts.	How do various assessments (required and teacher-developed) fit together to provide a profile of student performance? How is information collected for accountability purposes used to portray students, schools, and districts?	The assessment program includes multiple assessments: large-scale assessments (e.g., National Assessment of Educational Progress, nationally standardized tests), district developed or selected measures; and curriculum-embedded and classroom assessments. Together, they provide a comprehensive picture of student, school, and district performance. Instead of rating or ranking schools and districts, the reports focus on improvements over time and include contextual information that aids in interpretation.
8b. Assessment results and accountability information are used to improve students' and schools' performance.	How are assessment results and accountability information used? To reward or punish schools and districts? To target resources where they are needed?	When assessment results and accountability information show that student performance is lagging, additional support (e.g., technical assistance, training, funding) is provided to students and schools.
8c. Teachers receive assessment results from required assessments in a timely manner and in a form they can use for planning.	When do teachers receive results from statewide and other assessments? Are the results useful? Can teachers use the results to plan curriculum and instruction?	Teachers receive results in time to plan for the next school year, and they are provided time to plan in grade level teams. Assessment results are easy to understand because they are reported in terms of students' progress in meeting state standards. But teachers say they need more professional development in how to use these results and other information they have on student performance.
8d. The time spent preparing for and administering required assessments is limited.	How many hours/days per year do teachers spend preparing students to take required assessments? How much time is spent administering the assessments?	Teachers report time allocations in a survey conducted by the state association.



Standard 9: All stakeholders are accountable for making standards-based education work.

Indicators for Standard 9	Evidence of Implementation	Supporting Evidence
9a. Stakeholders understand the goals, purposes, and consequences of the accountability system.	Key Questions Are the goals, purposes, and consequences clear? How have stakeholders (e.g., parents, educators, the community, business leaders, policy makers) been engaged in defining goals and purposes? How have various stakeholders been engaged in determining consequences (e.g., loss of accreditation, requirement to develop and implement an improvement plan)?	The goals and purposes of the accountability system are clear and have been disseminated widely through print (e.g., newspapers, brochures sent to students' homes) and electronic media (e.g., state department of education's and education organizations' Web sites). The state asked stakeholders to help it define the goals and purposes of the accountability system. Policy makers (e.g., state education agency staff, legislators, state board of education) established consequences, and sought feedback from other stakeholders.
9b. Schools are accountable for the progress of their students in attaining high academic standards.	Exactly how are schools accountable? What steps have schools taken to assure that all students are making progress in attaining high standards? Do schools have the resources, personnel, materials, and training they need to educate all students to high standards?	Schools are accountable for demonstrating that students have either mastered the content outlined in state standards or they are making progress in meeting the standards. Schools promote or graduate students who meet the standards, and they provide assistance to students who do not. Schools monitor students' progress using curriculum-embedded and teacher-developed assessments; teachers meet regularly to discuss students' progress and adjust instruction as needed; before- and after-school sessions and one-on-one tutoring by teachers and trained teaching assistants are available for students who need extra support to meet high standards. State and district expenditures have increased annually and are at, or are approaching, levels required to support standards-based education.



9c. The state (or district) is accountable for building schools' capacity to educate all students to high standards.	What kinds of resources are available to build local capacity? How are resources (e.g., financial or technical assistance and support) allocated? How are inequities addressed?	The state (or district) has allocated financial and personnel resources to build local capacity (in districts and schools). Personnel resources include a cadre of experienced educators who are available to schools for on-site support and technical advice. Resources are increasing, and through legislation and litigation, resource inequities among schools (and districts) are decreasing.
9d. Families are accountable for sending their children to school and for supporting schools' and teachers' efforts to the best of their ability.	How high is average daily attendance? Are some students frequently absent? How do schools and teachers reach out to and involve families in their children's education?	Average daily attendance is not only high (e.g., above 90%), but few students are frequently absent. If a student's number of absences begins to increase, the school finds out the cause and works with the family to get the student back to school. Family members participate in at-home and in-school activities that reinforce learning and help their children attain high standards.
9e. Policy makers are accountable for decisions that affect the success of standards-based education.	Do various education policies promote standards-based education? Do policies that were enacted at different times and for different purposes support high standards? Are policies aligned; that is, do they reinforce and support each other? How are policy makers informed of the impact of their decisions on standards-based education?	The state has enacted policies related to teacher licensure, teacher assignment, and continuing professional development, standards, assessments, and accountability. The policies work together well and form a strong base of support for standards-based education. State-level report cards track policy changes, new legislation, implementation requirements, and resource allocations that affect standards-based education. Processes for monitoring policy alignment have been developed and implemented.



Standard 10: The implementation and impact of standards-based education are tracked and reported.

Indicators for Standard 10	Evidence of Implementation	Supporting Evidence
10a. The state (or district) tracks and reports information on the implementation and impact of standards-based education in a timely way for a variety of audiences.	Key Questions Are such reports issued? If yes, how often is information reported to various groups of stakeholders? If not, what would it take to cause them to be issued? Is technical information simplified?	The state maintains a steady stream of information through a variety of reporting mechanisms (e.g., written reports, newspaper articles, information on a Web site, town meetings, and other forums). Written, oral, and online information, especially about student and school performance, is easy to understand without oversimplifying complex information.
10b. The state (or district) uses information on implementation and impact to improve the success of standards-based education.	What kind of information is collected? By whom? Is information collected on both accomplishments and shortfalls? Does the state (or district) look for effects that were not anticipated or expected? What kind of information is reported about the effects of standards-based education on students? How is the information used to improve implementation?	The state department of education issues annual status reports on districts' and schools' efforts to implement student standards across subject areas, and the state's efforts to support implementation. In addition, as directed by the legislature, an independent nonprofit agency serves as an external evaluator of standards-based education. Its annual reports include information from stakeholders about implementation shortfalls and problems that need attention. The state (or district) reports the performance of all students and of groups of students (e.g., English language learners, students receiving special education services) to discern any differential effect of standards-based education across students. The state has revised the implementation of standards-based education based on annual recommendations from the independent evaluator.
10c. The state (or district) reports information that helps in the appropriate interpretation of assessment and accountability results.	Are test results printed as "score cards" in newspapers or are other data reported that suggest why scores look as they do?	The state (or district) reports contextual information (e.g., student demographics and funding levels) as well as other measures of student performance (e.g., graduation rates).



Standard # _____	State-Specific Indicators	State-Specific Key Questions	State-Specific Supporting Evidence

**Summary of Audit Findings for Standard # _____**

1. Is additional supporting evidence needed to evaluate the implementation of any of the indicators? If yes, what information is needed?

2. Which indicators are in place and how does the evidence support this conclusion?

3. Which indicators are not in place and how does the evidence support this conclusion?

4. What changes does the evidence suggest will strengthen the implementation of the indicators that are not yet in place?

Develop an Action Plan to Improve Standards-Based Education

Use the audit findings—especially the summaries you have prepared for each standard—to develop an action plan to improve standards-based education. Answer the following questions:

Action Planning Questions	Answers
1. Does the evidence you have gathered indicate that certain indicators and standards have not yet been fully implemented? If yes, what is not yet in place?	
2. According to the audit, which indicators and standards are most in need of strengthening?	
3. Which indicators and standards are your members' highest priorities?	
4. Which indicators are high priorities for the organizations that have conducted the audit with you? Of other key education, advocacy, or community organizations?	
5. Which indicators are high priorities for organizations you will enlist to improve the implementation of standards-based education?	





6. Which standards are the most critical to the success of standards-based education in your state?	
7. Which indicators or standards can you most effectively influence? Short term? Long term?	
8. What changes in the implementation of specific indicators and standards will you advocate and why?	
9. Where will you see the highest return for your effort?	
10. How will you bring these changes or improvements about? Who do you need to influence? Work with?	
11. How long will it take to make these changes?	
12. What resources (e.g., time, personnel, material) will you need to take action?	
13. How will your actions on one indicator or standard affect the rest of the standards-based education system?	



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